

### Bermuda Frogs Whistling in the Bark

NEW YORK (NEA)—Frogs whistle? Who says so?

It says so right here in a hand-out from the Bermuda News Bureau. Nonsense, eh? Well, it even gives the name of the whistling frog, *Eleutherodactylus johnstoni*.

Miss Elizabeth Maher is authority for this. She seems to think it will start a rush of tourists toward Bermuda by sea and air.

Ridiculous, you say? Well, maybe, but first there are all the frog fanciers, then all the connoisseurs of whistling. And if they don't fill all the steamships, airplanes and hotels, there are also the students of unnatural phenomena.

Another big group to be tapped is the anthropomorphists. They are people who attribute human characteristics to dumb animals or objects.

Miss Maher's handout doesn't give many details, darn it. It does say that the frogs live in trees, they give a thin, high-pitched whistle, and they were brought to Bermuda by mistake in 1880. It seems that a Lady Bedford, whose husband was an Admiral of the British Navy, brought a pair of *eleutherodactylus johnstoni* to the island in the belief they would kill insects.

Lady Bedford brought a male and a female hoping she would soon have her trees filled with frogs killing bugs.

Well, Lady Bedford was right in one of her assumptions. Her trees were soon full of frogs, all right.



But the darned things didn't kill any insects at all. They just sat around whistling!

An laying eggs. The baby frogs hatch directly from the eggs without any intermediate tadpole stage like the frogs you're used to (caecilians amphibians).

There were once some frogs up around Middletown, Conn., which got sucked up into a rain cloud and were precipitated in a pelting rain-storm, making a heck of a pitter-patter on the roofs and awnings.

Sure would be fun if a bunch of these Bermuda frogs got sucked up and came down softly whistling "Singing in the Rain." Somebody suggested "The Whistler and His Frog" here but we're trying to keep this a perfectly sane, sensible scientific story.

Miss Maher's handout ends on an inconclusive note. The frogs in their trees, whistling, Bermudians just sitting on their porches and making like they didn't hear them. What would you do if your trees were full of frogs, whistling?

Come nightfall and the visiting tourist is about to lap up the first frozen daquiri. Suddenly there is a whistling sound. It is picked up all

over the yard. Hundreds of whistles. Your visitor looks up, surprised.

You try to be nonchalant. "It's the frogs," you say. "Eleutherodactylus johnstoni."

Your guest looks hard at his glass. He's puzzled because he has not touched a drop as yet and he thought you said it was frogs out there whistling.

You try to shrug it off with a quip, perhaps. "Hmmm, they're not in good vol. . . er. . . whistle, tonight. You should hear their rendition of the Prelude to the Third Act of Lohengrin."

Embarrassing. Well, to say the least.

Where this handout from the Bermuda News Bureau falls down is in details like that. No answers to the big questions. And no practical suggestions, either. Somebody here in the NEA office thought there might be a market for these frogs. Bring them over under an extremely low import duty and sell them to people who can't purse their lips to summon their dogs with.

At the right price that might help England build up its dollar balance.

Somebody else thought novelty shops might sell them to drug store cowboys. The idea was the drug store cowboy would stand on his wolfing beat with one of these elephant. Comes along a pretty dame and he gently lifts the frog out of his pocket. Frog whistles. Dame glares. D.S. cowboy politely lifts hat and says:

"Pardon my frog."

Well, there must be lots of uses.



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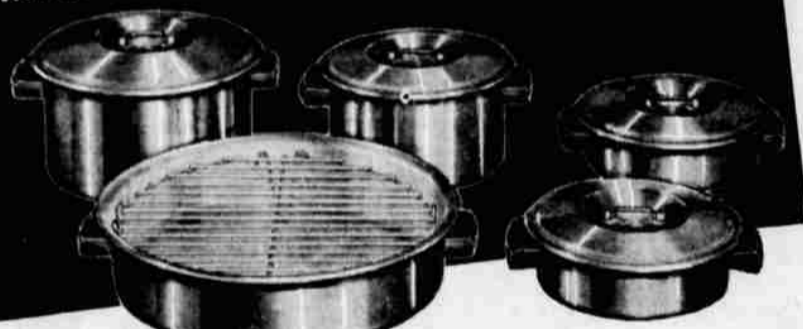
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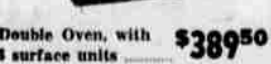


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